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NOTES FROM THE MEDICAL PRESS

IN CHARGE OF

ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

MANUFACTURE OF SYNTHETIC DRUGS IN ENGLAND.—*The Medical Record* writes that various synthetic drugs hitherto imported from Germany have been successfully manufactured in England. This will mean more independence of Germany in the matter of these supplies after the war.

NON-LIGATION OF THE UMBILICAL CORD.—A German observer concludes on the basis of a five years' experience, comprising 16,000 deliveries, that non-ligation of the umbilical cord is the method to be chosen in normal labor and with infants born at full time. Ligation he thinks should be reserved for asphyxia in the infant and hemorrhage in the mother.

THE SUPERSTITION OF FLAT-FOOT.—A writer in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* says that real flat-feet, when the foot touches the ground where the arch should be, are not necessarily painful and are often very serviceable feet. His views are the result of extended observation for several years of the condition of the feet of many nurses in a large general hospital. In the 800 cases studied he did not find one in which there was any change in the arch of the foot. The pain and disability is attributed to muscular strain. The ligaments also become irritated because the muscles can not reinforce them as they normally do. Weakening of general muscular power from illness, prolonged fatigue, etc., may induce the condition. A shoe with an arch fitting under the arch of the foot to support it, is recommended. High heels are not condemned because the foot is thus pressed forward on itself and the weakened arch is reinforced when this condition exists. In some cases of painful feet relief is obtained by raising the heel. In acute cases, exercises and the use of a flexible shoe may do more harm than good.

TO STERILIZE INSTRUMENTS AND KEEP THEM READY FOR USE.—*The Journal of the American Medical Association* mentions a German method of sterilizing instruments which is easy and said to be efficient. The blade is wiped for one minute with cotton dipped in tincture of soap and the procedure repeated with fresh cotton. Each blade is then wrapped separately in fresh cotton, dipped in tincture of soap. The instrument is laid away ready for use at once, or after an interval

of several weeks. This method has stood the severest tests and proved satisfactory after fifteen years experience with it.

DRUG ERUPTIONS.—A writer in the *Medical Record* says that these eruptions have two constant characteristics. They appear suddenly and always in connection with the taking of drugs. Suddenly means that on a hitherto perfectly normal skin there will be a sharp and decided inexplicable outbreak. The bromides, iodides, cubebs, copaiba, the coal tar preparations, quinine, belladonna, morphine, salicylate of sodium, arsenic, etc., are mentioned but any drug may be guilty if given to certain persons. The treatment is to stop the irritant and apply a soothing lotion.

NITROUS OXIDE GAS WITH OXYGEN IN LABOR.—In the proceedings of the Chicago Medical Society, reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, nitrous oxide gas is recommended as the ideal anesthetic in obstetric cases. With it analgesia has been maintained from the latter part of the first stage, or the time when the pains first become severe. All the women treated asserted that the pain was negligible, practically nothing. When forceps were used anesthesia was carried to the surgical degree and in normal labors when the head distended the perineum. With a good apparatus the cost is not over one cent a minute. The process is practically free from danger, even when continued for analgesia extending over many hours. One speaker believed that the nitrous oxide and oxygen method is safe even in the hands of those who have had little training.

THE X-RAY AND ECZEMA.—A writer in the *Medical Record* recommends the use of the X-Ray in the various forms of eczema, as they all have certain manifestations in common. It is always a circumscribed or diffuse hyperemia with dilatation of blood vessels, congestion and oedema with cell infiltration and proliferation. This requires local treatment that will inhibit the congestion and dilatation of blood vessels, retard the rapid cell changes and soothe by long exposure to a soft X-ray tube, or stimulate by short exposure to a hard one.

STIMULATING DOSES OF ROENTGEN RAYS.—A German medical writer reports the healing of an extensive burned surface under exposure to direct sunlight after long inaction. Stimulating doses of Roentgen rays were applied to old fractures that refused to consolidate. The results confirmed the value of the chemical rays in starting the regeneration of bone tissue, and promptly healing the fracture. The dosage must be merely stimulating.

INFLUENCE OF POSTURE ON DIGESTION IN INFANCY.—The *American Journal of Diseases of Children* says that air is swallowed with the food by most infants. If the child is held erect against the shoulder of the

mother after feeding, and gently patted on the back, the air escapes. If necessary, gentle pressure may be made on the epigastrium. The horizontal posture, by preventing eructation, is a frequent cause of vomiting. The child may be held erect before feeding, to allow any gas present to escape from the stomach. A feeding should not be taken too slowly. From five to ten minutes is enough as a rule and fifteen minutes is the maximum at bottle or breast.

PARTLY TRAINED NURSES.—The London letter of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, states that the difficulty of supplying nurses for the large new army, has caused the authorities to extend the qualifications for service, in order to render available every woman with nursing experience. The regulation that candidates for the army service must have a certificate of training from a hospital of one hundred beds is to be suspended and fifty beds will be substituted. The age limit has been extended from thirty-five to forty-five years; matrons, superintendents and sisters to fifty years. There will be full opportunity for retired or married nurses, and nurses who have not completed their training.

A WAR NURSES' RELIEF FUND.—Already many English nurses have suffered severely both mentally and bodily from their arduous duties. A committee has been formed for the purpose of providing funds to help them. Nurses on the staff of the army or navy are provided for by the government, but so far no relief has been arranged for the civil nurses, of whom between 1500 and 1600 have come to the aid of the country. Some of the conditions which they endure have been thus described by Miss Swift, matron-in-chief of the British Red Cross. They are often nursing in the midst of a bombardment for hours on end in the noise and the danger, their hospitals constantly the aim of the enemy's shells. They put up without murmuring with the most insanitary and uncomfortable conditions. At St. Omar, for instance they have no proper beds, no sanitary accommodation, no baths, and they have to face the same conditions, at Dunkirk and other places. So far none have been killed by shells, but one had a surface wound from a shell which might easily have been fatal. Shells were dropped continually on or near the hospitals in Antwerp, and the nurses who went through the strain of that bombardment are completely nerve shattered. A good many nurses have been down with typhoid and typhus, particularly those who are nursing in Serbia. The nurses who are running these risks are the pick of their profession, many of them women who command high fees and who have thrown up their civil work in quiet practice, where their own comforts were as sure as those of their patients, and have given their services for very little, because they knew they were needed.